DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 366 RC 010 475

AUTHOR Swick, Kevin J.; Henley, Lawrence J.
TITLE Problems and Prospects Confronting Rural and Small Schools: A Review of Research.
PUB DATE Nov 75
NOTE 25p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Development; Educational Alternatives; Employment Opportunities; *Facilities; Federal Government; *Financial Support; Futures (of Society); Instructional Materials; *Literature Reviews; Problem Solving; Regional Programs; Rural Development; *Rural Schools; School Community Relationship; *Small Schools; State Government; Student Teacher Relationship; Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Qualifications

ABSTRACT

A review of research on rural/small schools' problems, prospects, and possible alternatives indicates that these schools find themselves in a cycle of financial trouble, community disintegration, and dwindling population; they face problems such as low tax base, lack of financial support by state and federal government, inadequate facilities and instructional materials, inadequate overall funding, poor teacher quality, isolation, and lack of functional jobs. However, such schools have positive aspects in terms of potential for humanistic, personal, and community development. Major prospects for rural/small schools are found to focus on personal contact between teacher and students, opportunity for school and community to work together for rural development (specifically in the area of human problems), use of individualized instruction, and potential for developing alternative educational programs. Changes in poor instruction, school-community situations, and underfinanced programs of instruction revolve around continued programs for teacher improvement, regional cooperatives, experimentation with unique classroom instructional approaches, community school concepts, and new modes of financial support. Rural/small schools can give students of all ages comprehensive educational and social programs through regional approaches. (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED156366

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS CONFRONTING RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOLS: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

BY:

KEVIN J. SWICK, PH.D.
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, MEDIA
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CARBONDALE, ILLINOIS

LAWRENCE J. HENLEY
RESEARCH ASSISTANT
CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, MEDIA
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CARBONDALE, ILLINOIS

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kevin J. Swick

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

November, 1975
CARBONDALE, ILLINOIS

RC010475

The rural and small schools have historically fulfilled a vital social and educational role in the development and maintenance of rural life. In contemporary America, the rural school, like all schools, are confronted with many problems. Yet, these same schools have many positive aspects to them, and, if operated in effective ways, can continue to play a major role in the development of life in rural America.

As large schools attempt to regain the personal dimension in education by becoming smaller, the rural school is attempting to maintain their identify and yet develop a more comprehensive educational program. The rural and small schools need to continue their attempt to build high quality educational programs without eliminating the personal dimension they have long capitalized on in providing children with in the teaching-learning process. The authors, in the following pages, present a comprehensive review of the literature related to the problems and prospects confronting the rural and small school.

RELATED LITERATURE: PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE RURAL/SMALL SCHOOL

There are a myriad of problems confronting the rural/small schools in America. This section of the paper contains a description of the literature which has addressed itself to these problems. These problems include the following: financial, tax referendum situations, instructional issues, lack of instructional resources, and the need for special services for the school and community.

The problems are many but the literature contains some information which identifies the major issues confronting the rural/small school. For example, Thomas cited the main single factor to be the low salaries paid to rural teachers as compared to the salaries of suburban and urban teachers.[1] On the other hand, Warren reported the problems of coordinating special training programs, welfare, supportive services, and schools in rural areas. He pointed out that financial and geographical causes were at the roots of these problems.[2]

Tamblyn observed that educational programs are less than adequate in terms of facilities and instructional materials available for use in rural schools. He also noted that there is a disparity in state and federal taxes made available to rural school districts thus making it difficult for these schools to solve many of their problems.[3] Tamblyn assessed that rural schools only receive about seventy-five percent of funds in comparison to the full funding given to suburban and urban school districts. For example, Tamblyn points out that in 1966-1967 expenditures for education per capita was one hundred fifty

---

[1]Alan Thomas, Financing Rural Education. (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 088 653, 1974), p. 7.

[2]Stafford L. Warren, "The Implementation in Rural Areas of the Presidents Program on Mental Retardation", in the Report of the National Conference, National Committee for Children and Youth, Rural Youth In A Changing Environment. 1965, pp. 123-124.

[3]Lewis Tamblyn, "What is Happening in Rural Education, A Status Report". Carbondale, Illinois: Speech To The Rural Education Conference Report, Spring, 1975, pp. 12-13. (Copy of speech available from author).

dollars for metropolitan areas but only one hundred thirty five dollars for rural areas.[4]

Poverty is extensive throughout rural America as Edington has noted. Edington, in citing the findings of Mercure, explained that one half of all rural families in Northern New Mexico, Mississippi Delta, the Ozarks, and Appalachia had incomes below two thousand dollars. Edington also cited the study by Douglas which discovered that the mental health of rural youth living on farms in the United States was negatively affected by low economic conditions in their communities.[5]

The seriousness of the situation was recognized by a court in Beverly Hills, California. The court states that

> So long as the assessed evaluation within a district's boundaries is a major determinent of how much it can spend for its schools, only a district with a large tax base will be truly able to decide how much it really cares about education. The poor district cannot freely choose to tax itself into an excellence which its tax roles cannot provide. Far from being necessary to provide local fiscal choice, the present financing system actually deprives the less worthy of that option.[6]

In the St. Mary's Law Journal it notes that a public school financing system which may rely rather heavily upon local property taxes and causes substantial disparities among individual

---

[4]Lewis Tamblyn, Inequality: A Portrait of Rural America. Washington, D. C.: Rural Education Association, 1973. pp. 25-26.

[5]Everett D. Edington, "Disadvantaged Rural Youth", Review of Educational Research, 40 (1), February, 1970. p. 70.

[6]News Notes, The American University Law Review. 21, September, 1972. p. 735.

school districts discriminates against the poor; and, it also violates the equal protection of the rights of individuals as stated in the fourteenth admendment.[7]

Heesacker further substantiates the point made by the courts in California as he found that the lack of money to purchase needed services has become a way of life in most rural school districts.[8] Not only is lack of finances a problem confronting rural schools but the inability of many school people to communicate the need for such money is also a problem. Stark reported that in the Okland County District in Michigan the voters turned down a tax referendum because they did not know why such money was really needed.[9]

Instructional quality has also been a major problem confronting many rural schools. Due to the size of many rural schools (thus the lack of a populace for developing tax revenue) they have often had to settle for less than adequate instructional settings. For example, Thomas in his study found that some schools were simply too small to provide an adequate curriculum, qualified personnel, and needed student services.[10]

---

[7]News Notes, St. Mary's Law Journal. 3, Winter, 1971. p. 348.

[8]Frank Heesacker, "Hitching Up The Small School Districts", American Education, 6 (3) April, 1970. p. 19.

[9]Nancy Stark, "How Schools Can Listen to the Community", American Education, 7 (6), July, 1971, p. 7.

[10]Alan Thomas, Financing Rural Education. (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Documents Reproduction Service, ED 088 653, 1974. p. 23.

The effects of rural poverty and less than adequate instruction in some rural schools are manifested in lower achievement and poor performance by the students. Henderson, in his examination of the National Assessment findings, reports that rural school children performed below the national average in reading, writing, and in citizenship. The same tests showed that rural and inner-city youth performed poorly on the science and humanistic sections of the examination.[11]

The training of rural teachers for meeting the special needs of rural school-community settings remains to be a problem. Merrick points out that rural schools need to develop a career ladder for promoting improved teaching performance in their schools.[12] Positive efforts are being made, according to Tamblyn, to hire better prepared teachers by rural school administrators. He cites evidence that points out the increased hiring of level one teachers (teachers who hold at least a bachelors degree) by rural school administrators. Tamblyn believes that rural schools must increase their salary schedules and provide more benefits as incentives to attract better teachers to the rural school.[13]

---

[11]George Henderson, National Assessment and Rural Education. Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 085 127, December, 1973. pp. 9-34.

[12]Samuel V. Merrick, "Perspectives on Rural Youth Employment," in Rural Youth in a Changing Environment. Report of the National Conference, National Committee for Children and Youth, Washington, D.C.: 1965, p. 105.

[13]Lewis Tamblyn, "What is Happening in Rural Education, A Status Report," Carbondale, Illinois: Speech to the Rural Education Conference Report, Spring, 1975, pp. 19-22.

The importance of equal quality of instruction for all schools has been upheld by the courts. The American University Law Review reports that the right to an education today means more than access to a classroom. It should mean the right to the same quality of education afforded to every student within the state.[14] Yet as Heesacker points out there is a lack of comprehensive educational programs, for the majority of students going to school in rural America.[15]

Rural youth are negatively affected by the lack of comprehensive educational programs. Edington reported that generally rural youth received less preparation for successful entry into the world of work and thus and a much narrower range of occupations offered to them by employers. Within Edington's report data is presented that substantiates the fact that rural youngsters are delimited in the types of occupations they see and are prepared for in their school-community settings. Thus they often do not develop the kinds of attitudes needed for working in white collar occupations.

Another part of the Edington study, conducted by Skinner, indicated that much of the illiteracy among the Appalachian people was the result of failure to supply children with the means of learning to use standard English. And, standard English

---

[14]News Notes, The American University Law Review, 21, September, 1971, p. 734.

[15]Frank Heesacker, "Hitching Up the Small School Districts," American Education, 6 (3), April, 1970, p. 19.

is the language of almost all major career areas. As Skinner further studied the problem he found the same children to be very literate when content was taught in their language context but functioned less so when taught in standard language context. Thus Skinner suggests the up-grading of language arts teaching and the expansion of vocational programs to include training in attitude and performance areas.[16]

Another problem confronting rural educators is that of physical facilities. Although the physical surroundings of most rural schools is unique and quite useable in terms of real life learning, too often it is abandoned or not used properly. As Butterworth points out, farm territory provides a physical situation that has possibilities to develop into a true community where people in the country and village areas recognize their interdependence, their endeavors to develop services of mutual concern, and to continue activities that build and strengthen a cohesive common interest attitudes.[17]

In the same respect the physical distance between places in rural areas is a pertinent factor in regards to rural education. Edington cited two primary conditions in reference to the rurally deprived child: one being isolation and the other being poverty. The former is of special concern since it is

---

[16]Everett D. Edington, "Disadvantaged Rural Youth," Review of Education Research, 40 (1) February, 1970. pp. 72-78.

[17]Julian Butterworth and Howard Dawson, The Modern Rural School. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1952, p. 78.

characteristically most peculiar to the non-corporate farm child. Not only does geographic isolation hinder the child by confining his cultural experience to his own group, but also limits the schools chances of helping the child capitalize on his/her special talents.[18]

For example, as Taylor points out, children from rural and urban environments experience different interaction patterns. Social distance and discrimination affects both students and teachers alike because their background varies from rural to urban settings.[19] The problem soiety encounters is how to provide adequate facilities and expanded curriculum in small, isolated areas.

For example, Warren noted that the distribution of youth on farms vary in size and strength which brings into play the two factors of transportation and communication. Unless the parents and local school system have developed close rapport, the adolescent may not be motivated or able to make an effort to continue his or her education at a critical time of their life in order to start on a useful job.[20]

---

[18]Everett Edington, "Disadvantaged Rural Youth," Review of Education Research, 40 (1), February, 1970. p. 81

[19]Lee Taylor, Urban-Rural Problems. Belmont, California: Dickenson Publishing Company, 1968, p. 47.

[20]Stafford Warren, "The Implementation in Rural Areas of the President's Program on Mental Retardation," in Rural Youth in a Changing Environment. Washington, D.C.: National Committee For Children and Youth, 1965, p. 124.

Tamblyn also observed that the isolation of many rural communities contributed toward their scarcity of local leadership, inadequate tax base, irrelevant economical and political boundaries, shortage of competent qualified personnel and a general resistance to change.[21] Such conditions create many community problems. Some of these problems and their characteristics are explored in the following paragraphs.

Tamblyn, citing th final report of the President's Commission on Rural Poverty (entitled The People Left Behind) describes an unpleasant picture of the conditions existing in rural America. Rural poverty is so widespread it is a national disgrace. Tamblyn explains that one person in eight is poor in the metropolitan areas and that one person in fifteen is poor in the suburbs, yet one in four is poor in rural areas.

Seventy percent of the poor earn less than two thousand dollars per year in rural America and one family in four lives on less than one thousand dollars a year. For many rural children hunger and sickness are an expected daily fact. The unemployment figure in rural areas is heavier than the national average due largely to the seasonal nature of much of the available work offered to rural people.[22]

---

[21]Lewis Tamblyn, "What Is Happening in Rural Education Today, A Status Report," Carbondale, Illinois: Speech to the Rural Education Conference Report, Spring, 1975, pp. 14.

[22]Lewis Tamblyn, "What Is Happening In Rural Education Today, A Status Report," p. 8.

Tussing assessed that rural poverty is attributable to the failure of the smallest farmers, usually tenant farmers, to involve themselves in the agricultural revolution. Either they lack the wealth or credit to finance fertilizers and equipment or their land holdings are too small to farm efficiently with new, modern methods. Unsuccessfully in sharing in technological change, farmers have suffered the consequences in the long run decline in farm commodity prices that are sympathetic to other prices in the economic system. The big farmer holdings are much greater than the small farmer whose holdings are not as great thus making him more susceptible to bankruptcy.[23]

In the same respect, Heesacker indicates that rural citizens are not sufficiently informed when educational matters arise. The lower economic and social levels of the rural community effect a child's academic achievement in negative ways; a lack of communication between rural educators and the populaces has also effected the potential learning of the child.[24] Further complicating the situation is the fact that the business of agriculture no longer can support the rural communities attempt to build quality schools.[25] As agriculture has become

---

[23]Dale Tussing, Poverty in a Dual Economy. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975. pp. 23-24.

[24]Frank Heesacker, "Hitching up the Small School Districts." p. 19.

[25]Edward Moe and Lewis Tamblyn, Rural Schools as a Mechanism for Rural Development, Austin, Texas: National Educational Laboratory Publishers, 1974, p. 19.

a big business the sparcity of the rural community has assured the decline in the availability of educational and recreational facilities.[26]

The cumulative effect of poverty and scarcity of services on the rural poor are described by Tamblyn as he summarizes the President's Report on Rural Poverty.

> (a) Schooling in low income areas is as inadequate as income! Rural people generally have poorer schooling and are more severely handicapped by lack of education than are city people. Few rural poor adults have attained the general rural average of 8.8 years of schooling.
>
> (b) Low educational levels seem to be self perpetuating. When the head of a rural poor family has no schooling, his children are handicapped in their efforts to get an education.
>
> (c) Rural people, handicapped educationally, have an especially difficult time acquiring new skills, getting new jobs, or otherwise adjusting to society's increasing organizational complexity.[27]

Thus the rural poor do not know the value of education and when rural educators fail to keep an on-going dialogue with the community residents the problem is worsened. Indeed it is imperative for rural educators to continually have communication with

---

[26]David Dean, Community Schools in Rural America. Austin, Texas: National Educational Laboratory P;blisher, 1974. p.4.

[27]Lewis Tamblyn, Inequality: A Portrait of Rural America, p. 28.

the rural people if their educational program is to be valued.[28]

In essence, Jacoby points out that traditionally education has been oriented to the middle class and toward a liberal arts philosophy; all of which is in contrast to the rural poor. Education thus must be made more relevant to the poor of rural America if we are to make it a useful social tool in the improvement of our society.[29]

In summary, problems such as low tax base, lack of financial support by state and federal government, inadequate facilites and instructional materials, inadequate funding, poor teacher quality, the distance factor, and the lack of functional jobs are typical of situations existent in much of rural America. The poor, rural school finds itself in a cycle of financial trouble, dwindling population, and community disintegration.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: PROSPECTS CONFRONTING THE RURAL/SMALL SCHOOL

This part of the review of literature will deal with an extended view of the prospects of the rural and small school. The prospects that are pointed to in this section of the chapter include the personal climate of the school, the development

---

[28]Nancy Stark, "How Schools Can Listen To The Community," p. 7.

[29]Erich Jocoby, Man and Land Reform: The Essential Revolution. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971. p. 309.

of regional services to enhance rural/small school districts instructional programs, and the kind of individualized attention that can be given more readily in rural schools than in larger urban or suburban schools.[30]

For example, Jacoby comments that the modern society needs to re-examine the concept that largeness is goodness and find more meaning in the small land concept, thus creating more opportunity for personal attention to the needs of people.[31] Implementing this philosophy was Julia Weber Gordon who organized her instruction around the personal needs of the children.[32] Indeed the small/rural school classroom when managed by an outstanding teacher such as Dr. Gordon can be a very humanistic place to learn.

Thomas points out that it is expected of the rural teacher to maintain a close relationship with the community versus the urban teacher in the urban community. In addition, he comments rural teachers are laden with numerous other responsibilities such as being a social worker, truant officer, and medical advisor.[33]

---

[30]A. W. Sturgis, The Small School: A Rediscovered Resource in American Education. Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 088 622, March, 1974. p. 2.

[31]Erich Jacoby, Man and Land Reform: The Essential Revolution, p. 313.

[32]Julia Weber Gordon, My Country School Diary. New York: A Delta Book, 1970. pp. 124-132.

[33]Alan Thomas, Financing Rural Education, p. 8.

This multiple service role played by the rural school teacher provides unique opportunities to make the rural/small school more humane. As Clapp states:

> A school in a rural district has a unique opportunity to function socially...A community school foregoes its separateness. It is influential because it belongs to the people. They share its ideas and ideals and its work. It takes from them as it gives to them. There are no bounds as far as I can see to what it could accomplish in social reconstruction if it had enough wisdom, insight, devotion, and energy. It demands all these, for changes in living and learning are not produced by imparting information about different conditions or by gathering statistical data about what exists, but by creating by people, with people, and for people.[34]

Wagley cites a specific example of how the school can be a catalyst toward improved rural community living. Utilizing the agri-business as a focus he indicates that through the survey method the community can obtain information on economic job roles resources, needed education to perform such roles, and indices on the educational skills of the populace to perform these roles.[35] In support of the work of Wagley, Tamblyn notes specific techniques rural school-community agencies can use in maximizing the educational process to serve community needs.[36]

---

[34]Clapp, cited in David Dean, Community Schools in Rural Areas, p. 7.

[35]Leon Wagley, Community Development Guide for Restructuring Community Development in Agricultural Education. Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 085 153, 1974. pp. 82-84.

[36]Lewis Tamblyn, Inequality: A Portrait of Rural America, p. 29.

Legislative moves to implement some of the ideas explained by Wagley and Tamblyn include Senate Bill #2689 as cited by Dean. This bill aimed to provide recreational, educational, and a variety of other community and social services to the community school center in cooperation with other community groups. Although this bill would be a step in the proper direction it is limited in scope in that it only provides funds for four model rural community school projects.[37]

Moe and Tamblyn who have researched the community development concept and related legislation used to support it provide a summary of current thought on this aspect of rural education.

1. The highly localized nature of development of rural areas and rural schools, and the strong traditions of local control make increased capacity for problem solving and knowledge utilization at the local level a basic necessity.

2. At the same time, if the systems are to function effectively, the problem solving and knowledge utilization capacities at each of the levels identified above need to be increased.

3. Increased knowledge generation and knowledge delivery capacities need to be created at each level, and particularly at the levels primarily charged with this function.

4. Stronger linkages among the levels need to be devised and these linkages should strengthen two-way exchange.

---

[37]David Dean, Community Schools in Rural America, p. 9.

5. The role of R and D (Research and Development) Systems and community involvement concepts are critical to the secure development of a sound rural education program.[38]

In terms of accomplishing the kind of rural school-community setting Tamblyn and Moe describe they cite the Title IX Act entitled "Rural Development" in which it is stated:

> The Congress commits itself to a sound balance between rural and urban America. The Congress considers this balance so essential to the peace, prosperity and welfare of all our citizens that the highest priority must be given to the revitalization and development of rural areas.[39]

In describing the "Rural Development" section of the Title IX act Tamblyn and Moe list different pieces of legislation that pertain to rural development such as the community facility loans, business and industrial loans, business enterprises grants, and rural development research and extension programs.[40]

In spite of the development of the legislative acts aimed toward improved rural development, Tamblyn and Moe explain that many schools and communities in rural America remain isolated, dysfunctional, and impotent in terms of solving life problems for their citizens. Thus they suggest that the social groups (school, students, family, community, and state) need

---

[38]Edward Moe and Lewis Tamblyn, Rural Schools as a Mechanism for Rural Development, p. 7.

[39]Ibid, p. 21.

[40]Ibid, pp. 22-31.

to utilize rural development programs in concerted ways in order to build trust among the parties involved.[41]

An example of what Tamblyn and Moe describe in theory is exemplified in practice in the medical program in Alaska. There, radio equipment, community commitment, and educational expetise are used to bring instant medical attention to those in emergency need.[42] As Sturgis notes, community support, as implemented in the Alaska Program includes everyone. He recognized that an administrator, if he wishes to remain in a small school, must listen to the problems of the community and use his/her leadership skills to improve the human condition.[43]

Clark explains what a communication system should do in order to bring about improved development in rural areas. He states:

1. A means for putting the ideas, wants and needs of the people back into the educational system that serves them.

2. A means for providing academic, vocational, recreational enrichment, and leisure time educational experiences to community members of all ages.

3. A means for cooperating with other educational agencies that service the community

---

[41]Edward Moe and Lewis Tamblyn, Rural Schools As A Mechanism For Rural Development, pp. 68-69.

[42]Today's Education, 62 (5) May, 1973, p. 41.

[43]A. W. Sturgis, The Small School: A Rediscovered Resource In American Education, p. 4.

(in working) toward common goals in identifying overlapping of responsibilities and voids in services provided.

4. A means for community members to understand, evaluate, and attempt to solve locally basic human problems.[44]

Thus as Tamblyn explains, the goals of rural development are clear and initial legislation has been allocated. Yet the need is for schools and community agencies to initiate a consortium approach to best use these funds for helping rural areas deal with their human problems.[45]

This section of the paper has revolved around an examination of some of the positive aspects of rural schools such as the humanistic, personal, rural-community-development, and related social improvement possibilities existent within the school community context. The major prospects for the rural/small school, as pointed out in the literature, focus on the personal contact between teacher and student, the proximity between school and community for developing programs, the utilization of individualization of instruction, and the potential for developing alternative educational programs.

---

[44]Phil Clark, Guidelines for Relating Community Education and the Regular School Instructional Program. Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 085 148, 1972. p. 2.

[45]Lewis Tamblyn, Inequality: A Portrait of Rural America, pp. 13-14.

RELATED LITERATURE: POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING RURAL/SMALL SCHOOLS

This section of the paper contains an examination of the possible solutions or alternatives to the problems confronting the rural/small school. Solutions such as community based education, regional cooperatives, special service programs, individualized instruction programs, and new modes of financial support for rural schools are explored in this section of the paper.

One possible suggestion for improved education in rural areas is the continual professional up-grading of teachers. Tamblyn suggests a system for continual in-service education for rural teachers and an improved financial rewards system to attract better teachers to rural schools.[46]

Another suggestion for improving teacher performance in rural schools is offered by Swick and Driggers. They outline and described an in-service educational improvement program for rural schools. The basic points of their program are:

> (1) needs assessment within the school-community setting, (2) establishment of goals and objectives for the school-community setting, (3) identification of available services to meet the needs of the school-community, (4) organizing and developing available services for use in school-community setting, (5) an implementation plan, and (6) use of

---

[46]Lewis Tamblyn, What Is Happening In Rural Education: A Status Report, p. 23.

follow-up and continual evaluation to up-grade the in-service educational program.[47]

In the same perspective, Heesacker points to the use of small classes for individualizing instruction in the small school; and, also points to the use of shared services by a group of rural/small school districts to maximize the services for many children.[48]

A variety of experimental instructional techniques are being used by 'model' rural school districts and provide a direction for other schools to follow. For example, Bay and Black describe an audio-tape technique used on buses while students ride to school in the morning. Students can dial many topics such as lessons on seasons of the year and on history study.[49]

Another innovative instructional program was cited in Newsweek. A school in Granite City, Illinois, which is utilizing a newspaper current events program for reading and social studies skill development is described in the article. The uniqueness of the program is that it used a varied approach to

---

[47]Kevin J. Swick, and R. Kim Driggers, "Planning for In-Service Education in Rural Schools: A Developmental Model," Rural Education News. 27 (1), January, 1975. p. 2.

[48]Frank Heesacker, "Hitching Up The Small School Districts," pp. 19-20.

[49]Ovid Bay and Roe Black, "Big-School Services for Country Kids," Farm Journal (93), 9, September, 1969. pp. 22-48.

teaching 'core' skills of science, mathematics, language, reading, and social studies.[50]

Heesacker also described how audio-video equipment can be used to bring events live to rural classrooms. For example he cites how students in Stamford, New York were studying Eskimo culture and could directly see and hear Eskimos responding to many of their questions. Of course, as Heesacker points out, the Educational Television Network offers such services to many districts in the Midwestern part of the nation.[51]

Another idea on broadening the curriculum offerings through the use of modular and flexible scheduling is described by Sturges. He points out how some rural districts use flexible and modular schedules to free up students for work experiences in the community. Others use such an arrangement so they can offer mini-courses on special subjects to gifted and remedial students.[52]

Individualization of instruction in rural and small school classrooms can be expensive but also provides the best mode of improving the learning climate for children. Lamb in a very useful article, provides some suggestions for rural school

---

[50]Newsweek. "Learn All About It," 83 (1), January 7, 1974, p. 42.

[51]Frank Heesacker, "Hitching Up The Small School Districts, pp. 19-20.

[52]A. W. Sturges, The Small School: A Rediscovered Resource in American Education, p. 3.

teachers on how to individualize their programs of study.[53] Utilizing the same idea Thomas notes that quality instructional programs (such as individualized instruction) is costly but that finance studies of educational program show that quality program increase the economic stability of the rural community.[54]

An example of how quality programs in rural areas can be developed is described in the Texas Small Schools Project. Bitters explains that the small schools in Texas used a model that stresses the needs of pupils, providing services to help teachers meet these needs, and providing long range services to facilitate the educational program. It was found, Bitters points out, that schools could, by utilizing educational television, programmed instruction, correspondence courses, alternate year offerings, team teaching, and individualized instruction improve their programs and still minimize the expense factor when they did so on a regional basis.[55]

Edington supports the concept used in Texas. He points out that since rural schools have small tax base they need to use regional approaches to meet the diverse needs of the students

---

[53]Morris L. Lamb, "Individualization of Instruction in Rural Schools," in Conference Proceedings: Rural and Small Schools. Carbondale, Illinois, Spring, 1975. p. 11.

[54]Alan Thomas, Financing Rural Education, p. 10.

[55]Charles Bitters, "Small Schools Project in Texas," Rural Education News. 25 (3), May, 1975. p. 5.

and the community. Indeed many districts have consolidated their financial and educational structure.[56]

In summary, the findings of research and study on the problems and prospects confronting rural school indicates that there are alternatives to poor instruction, isolated school-community situations, and under financed programs of instruction. These alternatives seem to revolve around continued programs for teacher improvement, use of a regional approach to maximize services for meeting student needs, experimentation with unique instructional approaches in the classroom, development and implementation of the community school concept, and in some cases consolidation of the financial, legal, and educational structure of many small districts into larger districts.

Indeed, as the literature reveals, the rural and small school can provide students of all ages with a comprehensive educational and social program when communities use a regional approach; sharing resources and talents. Too often schools and communities have remained isolated, thus depriving themselves of many educational opportunities. Rural schools can work when they are operated humanly and effectively by leaders who use educational methods suitable to meeting the needs of their people.

---

[56]Everett D. Edington, "Disadvantaged Rural Youth", Review of Educational Research, 40 (1), February, 1970. p. 32.